



GLOBAL MEDIA RELEASE

## ***Plastic Free July launches 'My Plastic Action Counts' campaign***

- *Hundreds of millions prepare to take part in Plastic Free July 2021 campaign, despite two-thirds admitting single-use plastic has been harder to reduce during COVID-19*

**1<sup>ST</sup> JULY 2021, AUSTRALIA** – Plastic Free July launches 'My Plastic Action Counts' campaign to remind people that their actions count for more than just avoiding waste. Over 300 million people worldwide are starting Plastic Free July today to collectively create a healthier planet and healthier communities.

More than 130 million metric tonnes of single-use plastic waste was produced in 2019, 20% ended up as pollution, dumped in oceans or on land.<sup>1,2</sup> The amount of single-use plastic waste generated per person varies around the world, with the average person in Australia and the United States generating more than 50 kg per person per year in comparison to the average person in China producing 18 kg of per year; in India that figure is as low as 4 kg per year. Plastic waste is not only littering the planet, but now littering our bodies too, with the average person ingesting up to 5 grams of microplastic particles a week.

The COVID-19 pandemic has sparked a surge in PPE use and unfortunately single-use gloves, masks and bottles of hand sanitizer have been found in waterways and oceans around the world.<sup>3</sup> While 92% of people continue to support policies and action to reduce plastic waste, over two-thirds (66%) of participants have found it harder to make changes to reduce single-use plastic, it has never been a more important time to sign up and take part – to make a difference on this issue we care about.<sup>4</sup>

"Our waste disposal and recycling efforts are fighting a tide of new plastic waste that is being created every day," said Rebecca Prince-Ruiz, founder and executive director of Plastic Free July and the Plastic Free Foundation.

"If we only start to manage plastic waste once it is in the bin, we're not going to fix the problem. Instead, 'My Plastic Action Counts' celebrates the power we all have to live our values and protect our health, our communities and our environment through waste avoidance and reduction. Every person can be part of the solution, and every action counts towards this shared goal."

Plastic Free July is a real grassroots movement, families and friends across the country are reducing their plastic footprint by taking small but smart steps to reduce single-use plastic in their day-to-day lives. In 2020, participants each reduced 21kg of waste and together contributed to 900 million kg of plastic waste avoided worldwide. The majority (85%) of participants made changes that have become habits beyond July and a way of life with many sharing stories with others.<sup>4</sup>

Choosing to refuse single-use plastic 'turns off the tap of plastic waste at the source, reducing the chemicals we are exposed to when using the products and reducing the toxic impact of its life cycle. Reducing the waste we can avoid and recycling what we can't is significantly more impactful than landfills or clean-ups.<sup>5</sup> Furthermore, buying from businesses that are doing the right thing such as using recycled content in packaging creates opportunities for a circular economy for plastics rather than contributing to the production of yet more virgin plastics by the petroleum industry.

"There are millions of people doing the right thing by choosing to refuse single-use plastics. Around the world, we are seeing how the changes we make in our own lives can spread and sow the seeds for business and government to change. Now is the time to join in and make a difference by looking at the



plastics in your life, simply look in the bin, look at the litter that is on the street around you, and pick one or two alternatives such as choosing reusable fabric masks or coffee cups, choosing unpackaged produce or switching to a bar of soap. Together our plastic action counts towards the health of our planet and people,” said Prince-Ruiz.

Many participants around the world will kick off the challenge by taking part in a ‘Plastic Free Morning Tea’ at work, at home and out in the community. It is a tangible and delicious way to get others involved and start having conversations around plastic-free ideas, sharing solutions and making a real difference together.

Join in to be part of the Plastic Free July movement, learn more and make a difference, visit [www.plasticfreejuly.org](http://www.plasticfreejuly.org).

## ENDS

### Media contact:

For media enquiries please email [media@plasticfreejuly.org](mailto:media@plasticfreejuly.org) with your country in the subject line.

### Additional information

#### About Plastic Free Foundation

The Plastic Free Foundation is a global not-for-profit organisation leading the movement to turn waste off at the tap including the delivery of the annual Plastic Free July® challenge.

From humble beginnings in 2011, the award-winning Plastic Free July campaign was started by Rebecca Prince-Ruiz and a small team in local government in Western Australia. It has since grown into a global movement that shares Plastic Free solutions to help people and organisations to contribute to a world without plastic waste.

Millions of people across the globe make small changes that collectively make a massive difference to our environment and communities. Often starting in July, people understand the power of the own choices and find great alternatives that can become new habits forever.

On a larger scale, Plastic Free July challenge aims to kick-start long-lasting solutions and influence business and governments to take action to:

- Improve recycling: Follow local recycling guides and put items in the right bin. Petition governments to require businesses to use recycled plastic in their products and packaging.
- Embrace a circular economy: Encourage businesses and organisations to move away from the concept of ‘take, make and throw away’, towards a circular economy that promotes recycling and the reuse of materials.
- Extended producer responsibility (EPR): Push businesses to own the product management lifecycle. This involves producers considering the end-of-life of the products they sell, and making it easy for customers to dispose of products thoughtfully. Container deposit schemes are a good example of this – they reduce beverage container litter by an average of 40% and increase recycling too.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.minderoo.org/plastic-waste-makers-index/>

<sup>2</sup> Pew Charitable Trusts and SYSTEMIQ 2020, Breaking the Plastic Wave, (p25).

<sup>3</sup> Patrício Silva AL, Prata JC, Walker TR, et al. Increased plastic pollution due to COVID-19 pandemic: Challenges and recommendations. *Chem Eng J.* 2021;405:126683. doi:10.1016/j.cej.2020.126683

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.plasticfreejuly.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/PFF-Impact-Report-2020-screen.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.plasticfreejuly.org/the-plastic-pollution-issues/>